

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 3 – 20 and 22 – 24 are currently pending and rejected.

The applicants respectfully asserts that claims 1, 3 – 20 and 22 – 24 are in condition for allowance at least because U.S. Patent 6,987,665 issued to Pavlacka *et al.* (Pavlacka) is not available to support a rejection against the independent claims 1, 13, 15 and 16.

The applicants requests that the examiner withdraw all rejections against the independent claims 1, 13, 15 and 16 that are based on Pavlacka. The enclosed Declaration shows that the inventors conceived and reduced to practice the claimed invention in the United States before 25 October 2002, which is the purported effective date of Pavlacka. The enclosed Declaration is also timely presented after the currently pending Final Office Action because Pavlacka was not cited by the examiner before this final office action. Therefore, this is the applicants first opportunity to address a rejection based on Pavlacka.

The dependent claims 3 – 12, 14, 20 and 22 – 24 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependencies from their respective independent claims.

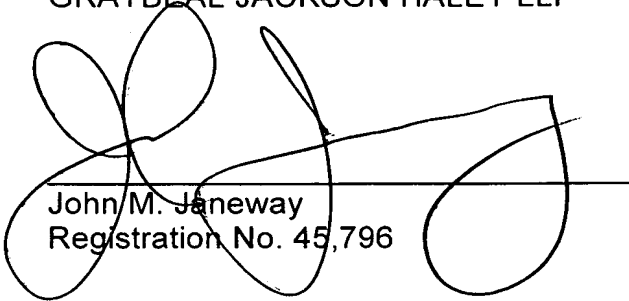
The applicants respectfully requests the examiner withdraw the rejection against claims 1, 3 – 20 and 22 – 24 and issue an allowance for these claims.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge, at any time during the pendency of this application, any required fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account 08-2025 pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.25.

Dated this 9th day of November 2006.

Respectfully submitted,

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